



Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation Emergency Preparedness Update for September 16, 2020

KY COVID-19 Update from Tuesday

(From [press release](#)) Gov. Andy Beshear on Tuesday said, "I will start by telling you one of the most exciting things about our COVID report is that today we are now under a 4% positivity rating." "That is moving in the right direction..." the Governor said. As of 4 p.m. Sept. 15, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 58,000 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 745 of which were newly reported Tuesday. Ninety-five of the newly reported cases were from children ages 18 and younger, of which 15 were children ages 5 and under. The youngest was only 27 days old. Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported nine new deaths Tuesday, raising the total to 1,074 Kentuckians lost to the virus. There have been at least 1,068,026 coronavirus tests performed in Kentucky. The positivity rate was 3.97%, and at least 10,962 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus. To see all recent daily reports, [click here](#).

Feds send nursing homes quick-test kits, but with rules that deter their use

(KyForward & KY Health News) Testing is one of the few tools nursing homes have to keep the novel coronavirus out of their facilities, and the Trump administration has tried to help by sending them equipment to conduct tests that give quick results. But while they were sent with good intention and are appreciated, the head of the state nursing-home association told Kentucky Health News that they are largely not being used in Kentucky right now.

Betsy Johnson, president of the Kentucky Association of Health Care Facilities, ticked off several reasons: concerns that the tests are less accurate than laboratory-based tests; the state is paying for more accurate lab-based tests through the end of the year; the tests come with daily reporting obligations; and nursing homes get only two free test kits per employee, with concerns about how to get more. The idea behind this aggressive testing strategy was to be able to identify people who had the virus but didn't have symptoms, but the problem is that these point-of-care antigen tests are not designed to do that. Politico reports that nursing homes have been told that it could be weeks before they will be able to buy more supplies for the rapid test.

On top of that, Johnson said the federal requirements are much more onerous than the state's guidelines, which are not mandatory and require only testing every other week. She said the federal rules have "caused us a lot of heartache."

Federal rules require nursing homes to test staff based on the overall positive-test rates in their county. If the rate is less than 5 percent, they must test once a month; between 5-10 percent, once a week; and above 10 percent, twice a week. The guidelines do not require them to use the antigen testing, but say that any off-site testing must have a turnaround of less than 48 hours.

Dr. Steven Stack, KY Health Commissioner, also noted that if they use the testing equipment sent to them by the federal government, they essentially become laboratories with all of the daily reporting requirements that other laboratories now have around COVID-19.

Full story: <https://www.kyforward.com/kentucky-lobbyist-says-feds-send-nursing-homes-quick-test-kits-but-with-rules-that-deter-their-use/>

Pfizer says coronavirus vaccine study shows mostly mild-to-moderate side effects

Read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-pfizer/pfizer-says-coronavirus-vaccine-study-shows-mostly-mild-to-moderate-side-effects-idUSKBN26631T>

Hospital ICUs lean on telemedicine amid U.S. COVID-19 crisis

(Reuters) Well before the current crisis, vast stretches of rural America lacked easy access to advanced medical care. More than 130 rural hospitals have closed in the United States since 2010, including 18 last year, according to University of North Carolina researchers. Rural areas tend to have higher rates of underlying health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Their populations often are older and poorer – making them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Even if beds were available, qualified staff are hard to find. It's estimated that 43 states, including South Carolina, face a shortage of highly trained ICU doctors, known as intensivists, according to researchers at George Washington University. These shortages may worsen with hospitalizations in many states predicted to peak this fall, when the coronavirus mixes with flu season.

About a third of U.S. hospitals surveyed in 2017 said they had access to a formal program of telemedicine for critically ill patients. Studies have shown telemedicine can benefit ICU patients by promoting the best practices supported by medical evidence and by reducing complications. During the pandemic, doctors say, it has helped conserve personal protective equipment and reduce workers' exposure to the virus.

There can be drawbacks, too, if physicians try to monitor too many people at once, which can lead to poor decisions or even medical errors. Tele-ICU generally requires physicians working remotely to hold a license in each state where people are hospitalized.

The administration has eased rules on telehealth during the pandemic and expanded reimbursement by Medicare. Sutter Health, a large hospital system in California, said it manages more than 300 ICU beds across 18 hospitals from offices in Sacramento and San Francisco. As use of this technology grows, patient-safety advocates warn hospitals not to cut corners. They say cameras and computers are no substitute for trained professionals at the bedside who can respond rapidly to life-threatening complications.

Full story: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-remote-icu-insight/hospital-ic-us-lean-on-telemedicine-amid-u-s-covid-19-crisis-idUSKBN2651MM>

**KY Public Health COVID-19 Update Webinar
Tuesday, September 22, 11:30-12:30 PM ET**

Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6149963668452379148>

During the presentation, they will give a brief update on the current COVID-19 situation in Kentucky and will cover topics including vaccine, school-opening background and issues, pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) situation, healthcare exposure guidance, and reporting and surveillance for COVID-19. *After the webinar, all registrants will receive a link to a video archive of the presentation along with a copy of any slides so will be able to view at a later time if you are unable to attend.* [Sent at the request of: Dr. Doug Thoroughman, CDC, Acting State Epidemiologist]

Over Half a Million U.S. Kids Already Infected With COVID-19

(HealthDay News) More than 500,000 U.S. children had been diagnosed with [COVID-19](#) as of early September, with a sizable uptick seen in recent weeks, a new report reveals.

There were 70,630 new child cases reported between Aug. 20 and Sept. 3, 2020. That brings the total to 513,415 cases -- a 16% increase over two weeks, according to state-by-state data compiled by the American Academy of [Pediatrics](#) (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association. As of Sept. 3, children accounted for nearly 10% of all reported [COVID-19](#) cases in the United States since the start of the pandemic, according to the latest weekly report from the two organizations.

Full story: <https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=246226>

Related from CIDRAP: [Experts seek to unravel COVID mysteries in kids](#)

Related story – CDC on CoV2 Associated Deaths Among <21

MMWR: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6937e4.htm>

COVID May Have Been Circulating in LA Months Earlier Than Believed

Learn more: <https://news360.com/article/537779131>

**Remember that COVID-spreading Maine wedding reception?
Seven deaths are now tied to it..**

Read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-wedding/seven-coronavirus-related-deaths-tied-to-maine-wedding-local-media-idUSKBN2663EQ>

NIH: Substance use disorders linked to COVID-19 susceptibility

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/substance-use-disorders-linked-covid-19-susceptibility>

Related story – KY gets \$35.4 million Fed Grant for Opioid Response

(From [press release](#)) Gov. Beshear and Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, discussed on Tuesday a \$35.4 million federal grant that will support the continued work of the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE).

The grant money was awarded to the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities and will advance the KORE's mission. This is a two-year State Opioid Response (SOR) grant awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The key initiatives the funding will help are increasing access to medications for opioid use disorder treatment, reducing unmet treatment needs and overdose deaths and expanding capacity to address stimulant-related deaths. For more information and to read the full news release on the SOR award, [click here](#).

Headaches and hospital visits as wildfire smoke blankets the U.S. West

(Reuters) As deadly wildfires rage across the U.S. West, people are struggling with some of the world's worst air pollution. Enormous plumes of ash and smoke have spread from the region, where nearly 5 million acres were ablaze on Tuesday, compounding the public health crisis of the coronavirus pandemic.

In California, levels of lung-polluting particulate matter have jumped far beyond the summertime norm, bathing skies in eerie tones of orange and sepia. Hospitals in hard-hit Oregon report a 10% increase in emergency room visits for breathing problems. Doctors are being inundated with calls from worried patients. Air pollution, in the case of wildfire measured by the amount of fine particulate matter swirling in the air, is considered a serious health hazard linked to diseases including asthma, lung cancer, heart disease and early death. Particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers, known as PM2.5, is the key measure for harmful air pollution. The particles are smaller than the width of a human hair, small enough to burrow deep into a person's lungs and even find its way into the bloodstream

Full story: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-wildfires-pollution-idUSKBN2671MV>

Related - Masses of Migratory Birds Are Dropping Dead



(Newser) Hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of birds are dropping dead in New Mexico, alarming biologists who suspect wildfires could be playing a role. Witnesses reported some birds were acting oddly before they died. Swallows were seen on the ground, though they don't walk. Other birds appeared lethargic and were getting hit by cars.

"Climate change is affecting the abundance of insects, it's affecting the volatility of the fires, and the scary thing is this may be an indication of the future."

Full Newser story link: <https://www.newser.com/story/296215/maybe-millions-of-birds-dying-of-unknown-causes.html>

Related CNN story: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/14/us/new-mexico-birds-died-migration-trnd/index.html>

Water shortages in US West likelier than previously thought

(AP) — There's a chance water levels in the two largest man-made reservoirs in the United States could dip to critically low levels by 2025, jeopardizing the steady flow of Colorado River water that more than 40 million people rely on in the American West.

The forecast could complicate already-fraught negotiations between Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Mexico over future shares of the river that supplies their cities and farms. Those talks will draw up new agreements by 2026 over use of the river that's under siege from climate change and prolonged drought.

Some of urban and agricultural water users have been forced to conserve water to secure the river long term, but it remains overtapped. And as cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas keep growing, the region is only getting thirstier. Learn more: <https://www.chron.com/news/article/Water-shortages-in-US-West-likelier-than-15570090.php>

Poisoning of Putin Opponent Renews Spotlight on Deadly Russian Chemical Weapon

(Science) A notorious nerve poison is back in the news. The German government said that Alexei Navalny, a prominent opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was poisoned with a chemical similar to Novichok, a deadly nerve agent implicated in other attacks on Russians who have crossed the current regime. A German military laboratory has found "unequivocal evidence of a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group" in biological samples taken from Navalny, who was flown to Germany for treatment after being hospitalized in Siberia on August 20, government spokesperson Steffen Seibert said. [Article](#)

Shared by KSHE – New Health Care Job Opening

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Logan Memorial Hospital - Russellville, Kentucky, 42276

The KHREF Emergency Preparedness Update is assembled several times a week. When events make it necessary, the Update may be sent out several times a day to keep our hospital and the healthcare community advised on preparedness news and information. Most of this information is compiled from open sources, and where possible reference links will be provided. There is an archive of [Emergency Preparedness Updates available here](#). If you would like to added or deleted, or have something you would like to contribute to a future edition of the Emergency Preparedness Update, please contact rbartlett@kyha.com (include your current email address). The preparedness program for the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) and KHREF are supported by US DHHS ASPR HPP funds through a contract with Kentucky Public Health.